



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: February 10, 2021.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:50 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes.

1. Administration.

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz, Michael Barry, Bill Copithorne (for Wayne Chouinard), Lenard Diggins, Ray Jones, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis (Chair), Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, Laura Swan, and Shoji Takahashi.

Members Missing: Wayne Chouinard, Howard Muise, and Corey Rateau.

Members of Public in Attendance: Becca Charlier Matthews, Sue Doctorow, Laura Fuller, Brian Hasbrouck, Christa Kelleher, Galen Mook, Alison Piasecki, Paul Schlichtman, Petru Sofio, Joe Solomon, Lindsey Sweeney, and Dan Walters.

The Chair read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law," announced that the meeting was being recorded and reviewed the meeting ground rules.

The minutes of the January 13, 2020, meeting were approved on a roll call vote.

Correspondence Sent/Received from 01/08/21 to 02/04/21:

- Memo dated January 26, 2021, from Marie Krepelka, Select Board Administrator, to Thouis Ray Jones, regarding his reappointment to a new four-year term ending December 31, 2024.
- Email message dated January 18, 2021, from Beth Locke, Executive Director Arlington Chamber of Commerce, to Howard Muise, TAC Chair, regarding Lenard Diggins reappointment to a new four-year term ending December 31, 2024.

Len Diggins explained that he was appointed to the TAC by the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, through his position on ACMi, prior to his election to the Select Board.

Correspondence Sent/Received from 12/03/20 to 01/07/21:

- Memo dated December 8, 2020 from Marie Krepelka, Select Board Administrator, to Howard Muise, TAC Chair, regarding (1) Traffic Concerns re: Westminster Ave., Downing Sq., and Lowell St. and (2) Speed Enforcement in Crosby St. Neighborhood.

2. Public Comments.

There were no public comments on issues not on the agenda.

3. Town Issues/Activities.

A. Bill Copithorne provided an update from the Department of Public Works (DPW):

The winter season is an active time for planning; construction is on hold due to weather conditions.

Mystic Street Bridge replacement plan was scheduled to be submitted to MassDOT this month. Two-phase construction is scheduled to begin in the fall. The design work was more challenging than anticipated because of the presence of utilities and the need to retain traffic lanes.

Lake Street/Minuteman Bikeway intersection is nearing completion. The finalized punch list was submitted to Dagle Electric Company to address outstanding issues.

Last TAC meeting, the committee discussed that automobiles had been trying to turn onto the Bikeway from Lake Street. To discourage automobiles from turning, temporary barrels were added in the middle of the Bikeway and "No Turns Except Bicycles" signs were installed to inform drivers. No issues have been reported since the installation of barrels and signs. The test will be driver behavior when the barrels are removed. The Town will consider adding "Minuteman Bikeway" signs at traffic signal.

Some of the pavement budget is being reallocated this year. DPW notes that the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) has improved and is aiming to increase the trend for this year.

B. Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

1. The Town submitted its application to the League of American Bicyclists to renew its "Bike Friendly Community" (BFC) status with advisement from the Arlington Bike Advisory Committee. Arlington was designated a "Bronze Level" BFC in 2012 and 2016

and is optimistic it could receive a Silver Level designation due to numerous upgrades including the addition of a bike counter near Arlington Center, installation of a Bikeway signal at Lake Street, and increases in the number of bicycle trips.

2. The TAC received a response from Vanasse Associates, Inc. (VAI), regarding the Thorndike Place Traffic Information Assessment (TIA). The ZBA will make a final determination in April 2021. A number of different groups has mentioned reducing the number of parking spaces and utilizing additional TDM strategies to reduce SOV trips.
3. The Town received a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) infrastructure grant in 2019, and construction is planned for 2024. MassDOT is paying for the entirety of the project. DPCD will work with the Stratton Elementary School Principal to engage the community. In the spring, a 25 percent design plan will be made.
4. MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) "Forging Ahead" plan is moving forward with service cuts to buses scheduled to begin on March 14. Route 67 hours will be shortened; Route 77 will see reduced frequency; Route 79 will be suspended for an indefinite period. These changes although "temporary" eventually might be on a more permanent basis. MBTA will need to submit an Environmental Notification Form, because of the scale of service adjustments. Public review is ongoing until March 2.
5. DPCD received the final draft of the Connect Arlington Plan from the consultant. The report will be brought to the TAC.

C. There was no update from the Police Department (APD).

4. Park Avenue at Appleton Street

Following a recent motor vehicle crash, residents near the Park Avenue and Appleton Street intersection requested an update from TAC on its evaluation of the intersection.

Jeff Maxtutis provided background information, explaining that, before the pandemic, TAC had assessed the need for a traffic signal at the intersection of Park Ave and Appleton Street. Traffic volumes were obtained, showing that the intersection meets the requirements for a signal. At present, an analysis is required to examine the effects of a traffic signal at Park and Appleton on traffic moving through the corridor (e.g., queue and delay on Park Avenue, coordination of signals at Mass Ave and Florence Avenue). TAC inquired with DPW on the possibility of identifying \$5,000 in its traffic signal budget to conduct a small analysis of the intersections.

Dan Amstutz introduced Joe Solomon of Appleton Street, who submitted a Town Meeting warrant for the spring requesting \$5,000.00 to fund the traffic analysis. He obtained 17 signatures for the warrant article, intending for the Town Finance Committee to make the allocation from other Town resources to pay for this study.

Joe Solomon informed TAC that he was involved in the 2019 data collection. Since then, there have been additional crashes at the intersection. He presented data slides showing that the intersection is a strong candidate for signalization, noting that the intersection is in the Top five percent of crash clusters in Arlington. A photograph demonstrated that some automobile crashes resulted in cars exiting the intersection and going onto resident property. Notably, the intersection is used by students crossing to/from Dallin Elementary School and Ottoson Middle School.

Joe Solomon inquired with the TAC as to the multi-year process to move forward on addressing the acknowledged problems of the Park Ave/Appleton Street intersection.

Bill Copithorne responded that DPW supports this study. He explained that the DPW budget for this type of study will be cut this year. Len Diggins asked for clarification on the budget and lack of prioritization for this study. Bill Copithorne responded that the portion of DPW's annual budget related to traffic studies will be reduced. The budget for these studies is shared with roadway maintenance, emergency repair, and equipment. There is little funding remaining for these traffic studies.

The TAC discussed the scope of the study (small/local vs corridor from Route 2 to Mass Ave) and the amount of funding to request. Several members thought that even a small study would exceed \$5,000. Scott Smith suggested requesting \$20,000 for a corridor study to bring to the Select Board.

Jeff Maxtutis clarified that this study would be the beginning; it does not include design or construction for the traffic signal. Joe Solomon supported the approach of requesting a larger sum for a corridor study, and he suggested examining a larger project (e.g., deficient sidewalks in the area).

Jeff Maxtutis responded that a larger scope will be discussed in the Working Group. He inquired whether there was an opportunity to increase the warrant request. Joe Solomon responded that he will inquire with the Town and inform the TAC.

5. New Work: Traffic Concerns re: Westminster Ave., Downing Sq., and Lowell St.

In the past, the TAC has examined and advised on traffic concerns on Lowell Street and Downing Square, and traffic speed measurements showed speeding on Lowell Street. The Town has made improvements to the area including sidewalks, pedestrian ramps, bollards, signs, and removal of angle parking. A development near Downing Square at 19R Park Ave is under construction by the Housing Corporation of Arlington, which will impact the area.

Becca Charlier Matthews of Lowell Street (near the Arlington Reservoir) provided her experience since moving there in November, 2019. She regularly walks her dog at the Reservoir and has observed numerous “close calls” with fast-moving vehicles. The Reservoir is a wonderful park, but the danger of crossing Lowell Street is a barrier to accessing it. Neighbors have informed her of vehicles speeding on Westminster Avenue from Lexington driving into Arlington.

Dan Amstutz said that TAC recommended additional improvements for Lowell Street including an RRFB to cross Lowell Street at the Reservoir and a speed detector sign facing traffic entering from Lexington. Although approved by the Select Board, the pedestrian signal and speed feedback sign have not yet been implemented, which would cost ~\$20,000. The recently passed Transportation Bond Bill includes funding for these improvements but it is not clear when the funding will be available. Jeff Maxtutis added that the Town has discussed with Lexington speeding vehicles on Westminster resulting in Lexington reconfiguring the intersection of Lowell Street and Westminster Avenue.

Becca Charlier Matthews also observed close calls walking and driving at Downing Square. She is concerned about the situation worsening with additional traffic from the new apartments at Downing Square. She requests the TAC reexamine the corridor and advise on possible changes. She has written a letter to the Select Board requesting speed-limit signs be installed on Lowell Street.

At the Downing Square intersection, Petru Sofio of Elmer Street recommended the installation of signs to inform drivers there is no stop at Park Ave Extension. There is no stop sign at Park Ave Extension because a traffic queue would form that backs up to Mass Ave. Melissa Laube agreed that Downing Square is confusing because it is not clear to drivers how to move through the intersection. Paul Schlichtman suggested signs saying “traffic from left does not stop”, or a modification of such text.

Jeff Maxtutis noted the challenges with sign clarity and language. He explained that TAC examined about a dozen alternatives at the Downing Square intersection. A traffic signal does not work at that location due to the backup to Mass Ave. The Town tried a temporary raised crosswalk

at Park Ave Extension, which resulted in a traffic queue extending over the bridge. A roundabout design would require taking land. The Town has since tightened the intersection to reduce vehicle speeds. Bill Copithorne added that pavement markings in Downing Square will be updated in the spring. Also, traffic lanes on Lowell Street will be tightened to try to slow speeds.

TAC Executive Committee established a working group, comprised of Mike Barry, Ray Jones, Jeff Maxtutis, and Shoji Takahashi.

6. New Work: Speed Enforcement in Crosby St. Neighborhood

TAC received correspondence regarding vehicle speeding on Crosby Street. Jeff Maxtutis mentioned that there is a TAC Memo from 2006, when speed measurements were taken on the southern portion of Crosby Street between Ridge Street and Columbia Road.

Laura Fuller, who has lived on Crosby Street for 16 years, informed the TAC that speeding on the northern portion of Crosby Street (between Old Mystic Street and College Avenue) started last year. Southbound vehicles are exiting from Route 3 onto Crosby as a cut-through route. She has observed commercial vehicles traveling more than 40 mph. Vehicles also travel at high speed moving downhill from Hutchinson Road onto Old Mystic Street and then onto Crosby Street, as there is no stop sign at Hutchinson Road and Old Mystic Street. There is no 25 mph Town Speed Limit sign. Importantly, the neighborhood is changing with many new families with young children walking and biking. The speeding is an all-day problem, perhaps worse in the early morning. The pandemic has exacerbated the danger as families and their children are home and walking and biking.

Lindsay Sweeney, who has lived on Langley Road (at Crosby Street) for five years agreed with Laura Fuller's observations. She noted that there are no posted speed limits on Langley Road. Crosby Street is a wide and straight roadway but hills limit drivers' sightlines. Most of the side streets connecting to Crosby do not have stop signs, and she has observed many near-miss incidents.

Dan Walters of Falmouth Road has two young children under the age of four years. He agreed with Laura Fuller's and Lindsay Sweeney's comments. He has observed high speeds and near misses, and mentions the dangers imposed on an elderly neighbor.

Bill Copithorne inquired about the prior 2006 study. Jeff Maxtutis responded that speed measurements at the southern end of Crosby Street did not show vehicle speeding. Minor improvements were made, such as the addition of signage. Dan Amstutz commented that the Town-wide speed limit is now 25 mph, and expected speeds are lower now than when the prior study was conducted in 2006.

TAC Executive Committee established a working group comprised of Mike Barry, Melissa Laube, and Shoji Takahashi. Jeff Maxtutis informed the TAC that speed measurements will need to wait at least until the spring, so snow does not interfere with the count and until the public schools' schedule and commuter patterns are closer to normal as the impacts of COVID lessen.

7. Discussion: Relocation of MBTA Bus Stops on Pleasant St.

Dan Amstutz informed the TAC that MBTA is planning on relocating three Route 67 bus stops on Pleasant Street under its "Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI)".

(1) Pleasant Street at Brunswick Road: This is MassDOT property, and there are plans to improve the pedestrian crossing. Jeff Maxtutis asked whether DPW needs to approve or comment on this location as it is MassDOT property. Dan Amstutz responded that Wayne Chouinard has responded to MassDOT and MBTA with comments. Bill Copithorne added that the contractor will obtain permits and submit plans for Town land locations. In the past, the MBTA contractor has not informed the public about its construction work, which has resulted in resident complaints.

(2) Pleasant Street at Irving Street: relocation on the far side of the intersection with Irving Street (southbound).

(3) Pleasant Street at Wellington Street: relocation of bus stops from Addison Street and Oak Knoll closer to Arlington Center and near the Boston Church of Christ and Saint John's Episcopal Church. Parking spots will be shifted. Planning for public outreach before MBTA presents it to the Select Board.

Scott Smith commented that he likes the bus stops being relocated to Wellington Street, noting that it improves bus-stop spacing along Pleasant Street. He informed the TAC that another MBTA bus route, which does not operate on Sundays, suspends "no parking at bus stop" on Sundays thereby permitting parking. This might be important in discussions with the churches near Wellington Street.

Len Diggins concurred about permitting parking at the bus stop on Sundays, and he asked whether the new bus-stop locations would accommodate bus shelters. He added that he would like to see more bus shelters in the Town. Dan Amstutz responded that he does not recall the minimum space requirements for bus shelters and whether the new locations could support them. He will look into permitting Sunday parking at the Wellington Street bus stop.

8. Update: Mystic River to Minuteman Bikeway

The Town submitted a MassTrails grant application on a plan to connect the Mystic River trails to the Minuteman Bikeway. In particular, the application is to fund a \$100,000 study (\$80,000 from MassTrails; \$10,000 match from Lawrence and Lillian Solomon Foundation) for a connection between the Minuteman Bikeway at Buzzell Field and along Mystic Valley Parkway, to River Street connecting it to the Alewife Greenway Bike Path. This connection is included or referenced in (a) the Mystic River Watershed Association's Greenway Plan; (b) DCR 2009 Mystic River Master Plan; and (c) MAPC Section on Greenway Planning. The study will examine the rotary crossing at Medford Street and construction phasing, costs, and identifying possible funding sources.

There is a high level of interest in this project from many stakeholders. The Town received seventeen letters of support including from Somerville, Medford, TAC, and ABAC. The Town has had conversations with DCR and MassDOT, and both are in support of the study. Much of the project area, including the rotaries, is DCR property. MassDOT controls the bridge over the river.

Presently the trail along the Mystic River is narrow and rooted, severely hampering accessibility. Crossing at the rotaries by pedestrians and cyclists is dangerous. The Town submitted a letter to DCR in 2012 regarding its concern for pedestrian crossing. Bill Copithorne recommended discussing the rotary with Wayne Chouinard of DPW, who has thought a lot about pedestrian crossing at that location. In addition, the intersection of Mystic Valley Parkway and Route 3 is auto-oriented and also challenging for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.

Paul Schlichtman concurred with the assessment of existing conditions and wondered about the possibility of a pedestrian path under the bridge. He added the possibility of routing pedestrians and cyclists from Mystic Valley Parkway to Kimball Road and neighborhood streets instead of the Route 3 intersection. Petru Sofio agreed with examining a Kimball Road Bicycle Boulevard connection and added consideration for a HAWK signal or RRFB at the roundabout.

Dan Amstutz responded that Kimball Road is an idea to pursue but with challenges such as the steep grade. Also, there is interest in redesigning the intersection at Route 3.

Jeff Maxtutis inquired about the bike path along Lower Mystic Lake. Dan Amstutz responded that it is drawn as a 10 – 12-foot wide, two-way facility on the northside of Mystic Valley Parkway. The study will explore alternatives.

Laura Swan added that she greatly appreciates the project and the green space. She expressed concern about bicycling on Summer Street

near Buzzell Field particularly with automobile parking related to athletic games. Dan Amstutz responded that parking demand will need to be addressed as part of the process.

9. Update: Mass Ave at Appleton St.

At the January Meeting, Bill Copithorne informed TAC that Green International Consulting submitted a preliminary plan to DPW providing short-term remedies at the intersection of Mass Ave and Appleton Street. DPW allocated funding for this study from its traffic budget. A question was raised regarding the review process and the role of the Design Review Committee. At present, the Town Manager has not finalized the Committee membership. Once it is formed, the draft plan will be forwarded to the Design Review Committee, which will review it and present it to the TAC.

Jeff Maxtutis asked whether the study will provide short- and long-term solutions. Bill Copithorne responded that the initial plan provides short-term solutions. The Town is seeking a long-term solution for the entire corridor.

Galen Mook of MassBike asked whether there was a plan for immediate solutions to be implemented. Bill Copithorne responded that it is unknown at this time. The Design Review Committee could look at temporary solutions to implement.

Petru Sofio inquired if there was interest in separating Appleton Street and Appleton Place as two different intersections. Bill Copithorne responded that there are draft concepts examining changes to the intersection structure, and also considering one-way traffic movement. Dan Amstutz added that topography of the location poses challenges with changing the intersection structure.

Petru Sofio informed the TAC that sun glare will soon pose a problem to drivers at the intersection. He inquired whether APD will place cones to restrict movement as it had done last year. Jeff Maxtutis responded that APD is not here to address this question.

10. Chestnut St. Traffic Calming

Dan Amstutz updated TAC that the Town will be conducting outreach to abutters of Chestnut Street. Planning is underway for a community meeting to bring ideas/concepts on reconfiguring Chestnut Street to discuss. At present, there is no set date for a public meeting.

11. Update: Thompson School Traffic Calming

Laura Swan has been in contact with Judy Crocker, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator for our region. We are awaiting the report from Judy Crocker who will present them to Thompson School.

Laura Swan noted that the Town's Complete Streets list includes many streets in the area around Thompson School. She inquired as to when these streets would be reconstructed. Jeff Maxtutis responded that this is a prioritization list for the Town. Dan Amstutz provided background on the Complete Streets funding: Towns first create and adopt a policy, then make a priority list, and then apply for funding from the Commonwealth. An application requires a cost estimate for the project; Complete Streets funding will pay for construction only. The Town had applied for and was awarded Complete Streets funding for Gray Street. (It also applied for but was not awarded Complete Streets funding for the Minutemen Bikeway/Lake Street Intersection; funding for the project was by Town appropriation.)

Bill Copithorne added that many municipalities have not yet been awarded Complete Streets funding from the Commonwealth. DPW has done work on curbs and pedestrian infrastructure in the area (Michael Street, Sunnyside Avenue). Unfortunately, there are many areas to address.

Dan Amstutz noted that Judy Crocker also will be submitting a report on arrival/dismissal at Dallin School. These will be recommendations based on SRTS Audit, which includes updates in signage and traffic flow changes.

12. Update: Washington Street Issues

Melissa Laube presented for the Working Group highlighting the existing conditions: this section of Washington Street is a private way with pavement in poor condition. The roadway is narrow with a sharp turn that has necessitated vehicles having to back up in order to permit traffic to move in opposite directions. There is a lot of bicycle and pedestrian traffic to/from the Bikeway.

The Working Group has considered yield signs, closing off this section from automotive traffic, and making the roadway one-way.

The overriding issue is that it is a private way. What is permissible? And how would AFD, APD, and trash collection react to one-way traffic or even closing it to motor vehicles?

Melissa Laube added that residents have differing opinions; some are concerned that repaving might increase traffic.

Bill Copithorne responded that the largest concern for the Town is limiting emergency vehicle access. Regarding repaving, he added that

private road abutters are responsible for damage incurred by traversing vehicles if it is not properly maintained. He also suggested reviewing Town Counsel guidance on private ways.

Scott Smith suggested having conversations with the abutters.

Jeff Maxtutis suggested drafting a matrix of solutions. The matrix solutions then can be evaluated by applying constraints such as abutter preferences, legal constraints, limits to emergency access.

Dan Amstutz offered to liaise with Town Departments (such as AFD, APD, Town Counsel, Recycling Coordinator) to assist in the assessment. Melissa Laube accepted the offer and will draft a memo for Dan Amstutz to send to Town departments for guidance.

13. Update: Mass Ave Crosswalks at Water St., Town Hall, and Academy St.

The TAC Executive Committee identified Mass Ave crosswalks in Arlington Center as a TAC-initiated project as there are no prospects for the Town to be able to proceed with "Phase 2" of the Mass Ave Project from Franklin Street to Mill Street.

Shoji Takahashi reported that the members visited the site last month to conduct observations looking towards short-term and long-term improvements. The crosswalks are at Academy Street, Town Hall, and Water Street/Peg Spengler Way (Robbins Library).

Currently there is visibility problem at the north side of the Town Hall crosswalk. The Town should consider removing the one parking spot on the northside of Mass Ave immediately to the east of the crosswalk. Dan Amstutz said that he will discuss it with Ali Carter of DPCD. In the past, Corey Rateau had agreed with the idea of removing the parking spot to enhance pedestrian visibility.

On the south side of Mass Ave at the Library/Water St crosswalk it is difficult for pedestrians to see or be seen by approaching eastbound vehicles when cars are parked in legal spots. This results because of a slight horizontal curve to the south on Mass Ave just west of the crosswalk. The closest legal parking space to the crosswalk is a handicap space and if that space is occupied, pedestrians must move several feet into the road to see and be seen by approaching eastbound vehicles. A bump out at that location would increase pedestrian visibility.

In the short term, consider adding (1) signage, such as pedestrian crosswalk signs or rectangular rapid flash beacons (RRFB) and (2) pavement markings such as crosshatches in the extant no-parking zones. Flex posts might be useful to add in the no parking zones and (3) a temporary bump out with paint and flex posts on the Library side of the crosswalk at that location.

In the longer term, consider raised crosswalks, bump outs, and extending the Mass Ave median at Water Street. Presently, pedestrians face a multilane crossing without refuge when crossing at the library/Water Street. There is an opportunity to reduce crossing distance and improve visibility of pedestrians by adding a bump out. TAC will consider design methods to prevent left turns out of the library parking lot and left turns from Water Street. Bill Copithorne responded that he will locate a previous DPW plan of a bump out at Peg Spengler Way (Robbins Library).

Petru Sofio inquired whether a road diet is being considered. Dan Amstutz responded that the draft final Connect Arlington plan suggests examining a road diet as a strategy to address bicycle access and pedestrian safety.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.